Monte Rosa

THE EPIC OF AN ALP

Starr H. Nichols

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MONTE ROSA

THE EPIC OF AN ALP

BY

STARR H. NICHOLS

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To

MY BELOVED WIFE,

FOR WHOSE PLEASURE THIS PUBLICATION WAS BEGUN—

FINISHED, ALAS! TOO LATE.

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MONTE ROSA.

I.

ZERMATT.

By the long ranges of Valaisian Alps
That crowd the narrowed skies with majesty,
Where hoarsely cries the new-born river Wisp
Within its valley-cradle, old Zermatt,
Low-lying in a streamy gorge, receives
The guest of Nature to her fastnesses.
To its seclusion, deep as if wide seas
Spread silver silence round its solitude,
Devoutly gather, as to holy shrines,
Far-traveled pilgrims leaning on their staves,
And gladdened with the grandeurs of the way.

Like statues of pale marble, Titan-tall,
And calm in Titan strength, the snowy peaks
O'ergaze the lowlier vales. Their lifted brows
Confront the arch of heaven on equal terms;
Their grisly flanks record the flight of years
Whose score is hid in dim eternities;
Their hoary heads, wrapped in white silence, seem
As lost in deep and sombre reverie
Upon the painful changes whose rude hands
Have checked their fiery and unfearing youth,
And trimmed them to this bleared antiquity.
Old gray-beards! Do they still recall, perchance,
The revelries of earlier days of yore,
When the tough-layered planet rent its folds,
And burnt its rocky bands like tow in twain,
Rocked all its coasts with earthquake, roared with storm,
And with volcanic torches ringed its skies,

While all the elements joined gleeful war,
Their moods being wilder and their forces young?
Time-born, time-worn, and yet outwearing time,
Are these dumb heralds in their age content
To stand mere vouchers of those stirring times?
And help the younger thoughts of men to glance
Through chemic mysteries of cosmic change,
Through strange repulsions and attractions strange
At play within the bubble of the globe,
Till riotous earth, distrained of youthful heats,
Convulsively drew close her shivering frame,
And shriveled like a beldame cowered about
The waning heap of unreplenished fires?
What lines of wretchedness then scarred her face!
What furrows drew the ever-cruel hours!
How wrinkled like an ocean, high and wide,
Rose the rough ridges of deforming rock
In measureless confusion sprawled abroad!

And still the unrelenting years ran on,
True wandering Jews, whose restless journeying
Left fossil footprints on each splintered ridge,
And softly hewed the cliffs, till here were cloven
The sundered peaks, divided widely separate
By yawning gorges, whence the sculptured crests
Stood glorious o'er their valleys like young gods
Fresh-fallen from high Olympus; such great Jove
Might set to sentinel his chosen land.

But who the sculptors whose all-potent hands
Had chiseled out this giant statuary?
What Titan, demon, demigod in rage,
Brawny artificer, loosed his huge strength
Upon these ridges, and for wrath drove through
The iron barriers of these rended crags?
How shattered he the rock, and with what shards

Laid on such crashing blows, and clove the
stone
To such immensity, and left it torn
In such a crazy chaos, world gone mad,
The harsh memorial of his tempest wrath?
And then what artist, crammed with lawless
thoughts,
Came in to carve the shapely peaks supreme,
And fashion out their graceful savagery?

Who? Who indeed? Nor Titan, demon, god,
Wrought here; no angry Vulcan from his forge,
No hundred-armed Briareus wroth with Jove,
No sullen dwarf from fire-fed Jotunheim,
No thought-distilling brain, nor maddened will,
Unleashed their forces on these shattered cliffs.
No! nor no tempered steel rang on their sides,
No enginery thrust home a rattling tool,
Nor hand or hammer split their welded sands,
Nor artist chiseled out the towering crests.

But architect and craftsman both was he
That all things terrene rules, the immortal sun
That like high God toils ever weariless,
Not taking Sabbath, not desiring rest,
Nor sparing time, but squandering like a prince
The golden minutes of his myriad years.
He having moulded earth a little star
From fiery mist and immemorial time,
And bent her planetary circle true,
Called out his servants to complete her orb.
The cloud he beckoned forth from hollow sea
And charged with shower ; the winds so lordly free
He bid to ride as lackeys at his wheel ;
The ice was his forbearance, and hale heats
His unreined strength ; while frenzied lightnings struck
With borrowed hammer of his radiance forged ;
For Lord of lords is he, and his the elements
To fetch and carry as his utter slaves.

So here he put these untaught serfs to task
Like strolling journeyman chance-found and hired,
Or clumsy laborers working by the day;
A paltry mob of idlers, vagabonds,
Rash and uncouth mechanics, frivolous,
Guiltless of plan, whose sloven art made light
Of line and square and compass' puny rule,
Who laughed at pains and scorned the score of hours.
The fickle shower flew headlong at the ridge,
Pelting all ways; the plumy snow-flakes brushed
Their innocent weakness on its stony face;
Weak streamlets wandered feebly down the rock
In baby furrows, careless of their way;
And aimlessly the strong winds whirled about;
The crafty frost drove his thin wedges home
In scar and seam; the lightning's random sledge
Smote blows of Thor on every eminence;

The ponderous glaciers pushed their awkward
planes
Wherever plane would run; and daily fell
The dash — the soft, innumerable dash —
Of the sun-waves' foamless surf, in which the
stone
As gently broke as break the close-sealed buds
Of dauntless violets, when young March
Hunts pallid winter from the greening fields.
These vagrant workmen, with light touch and
strong,
Drove at the fire-tried rock as if for sport,
Nor cared a whit when grandeurs unforeseen
Began to grow beneath their frolic hands;
But wantonly they dashed about the crests,
Flew down each gorge, swept every ledge, and
played
Along the dreadful precipice familiarly, —
Children of cloud and air that took no
thought,

Yet in good time fulfilled their due, and set
Their antique nobleness upon the peaks,
And flung the snows about them for a robe,
And mailed their cones in ice impregnable,
And showed their whiteness 'gainst the vaulted
blue
For one brief hour of geologic time;
Dumb witnesses to our disdainful day
Of what was doing on earth ere man had come
To see.

And that unlettered time slipped on,
Saw tropic climes invade the polar rings,
Then polar cold lay waste the tropic marge;
Saw monster beasts emerge in ooze and air,
And run their race and stow their bones in clay;
Saw the bright gold bedew the elder rocks,
And all the gems grow crystal in their caves;
Saw plant wax quick, and stir to moving worm,
And worm move upward reaching towards the
brute;

Saw brute by habit fit himself with brain
And startle earth with wondrous progeny;
Saw all of these and still saw no true man.
For man was not, or still so rawly was,
That as a little child his thoughts were weak,
Weak and forgetful and of nothing worth,
And Nature stormed along her changeful ways
Unheeded, undescribed, the while man slept
Infolded in his germ, or with fierce brutes,
Himself but brutal, waged a pigmy war,
Unclad as they, and with them housed in caves,
Nor knew that sea retired or mountain rose.

So later men but found the peaks in place,
Nor dreamed of their strange making, how it fared,
But saw two ranges ranked in parallel,
Two rival chains unearthly high, between
Whose white battalions wound the gorge,
The streamy, deep-drawn gorge where river Wisp

Blows his complaining trumpet loud and shrill.
There delves a scanty tribe of pious Swiss,
A care-bewildered folk in petty fields,
And oft think ill of hills their frequent bane.
These peaks men found, and lent them freakish names,
Names since become thrice dear to mountaineers,
Who, having challenged death on their cold flanks,
And given him odds for love of the blind play,
Came back in triumph as from battles won.
Each name a cloudy giant christens, one
Whose Atlantean port in other land
Would gather legend and sweet praise of song;
Names thick with consonants uncouth of sound,
That make scant music in the beat of verse;
Stockhorn, Broad Rympfishhorn, and Strahlhorn tall,
And Allah-lin yclept of Saracens

In their brave days when great through Allah's
name
They harried beaten Christians o'er these
heights ;
Succeeds the bucklered crown of Alphubel,
Held sternly 'gainst unweariable storms ;
Then four slant towers of shaggy Mischabel,
Highest mid high ; with many lesser spires ;
Like Nubian slaves in burnous glistening white,
Their cliffs rise blackly, folded oft in snows
To shine untrammeled in the upper light,
Each free and proud as were all heaven his own ;
Like Nubian slaves their feet below are fast
Chained to those mighty buttresses of crag,
That with obtruding bareness crowd the leas.

Confronting these across that rock-bound gorge
Cut by the mad-waved Wisp long ages through,
The rival range exalts superior peaks ;
For on a rugged shoulder of old rock,

Whose unhealed scars betray time's awful strife,
Vast Weisshorn's slaty pyramid — so vast
That were all Egypt's build from its large flank
Out-quarried, 't would no diminution show —
In stony strength uprears its triple walls
Above all rivals, and with gleaming load
Of pendant glaciers decks the front of heaven.
How long all isolate, mocking each approach,
It held bleak spaces of thin air alone !
Till restless Tyndall of its grandeurs fain
Challenged its cloudy terrors, boldly braved
The rain of stones that rattle down its cliffs,
The demon winds that wrestle o'er its wedge,
The treacherous cornices of snow, storm-curled
O'er gulfs abysmal that befringe its crags, —
Braved all, and all out-braving all o'ercame ;
Then light of foot deflowered the virgin snow,
That slenderly leaps into kindred cloud
From the slim tip, its last of mortal earth.
Next this, the Rothhorn lifts his beamy spear

As burnished steel upon the vassal clouds;
And, smooth as ivory with cool sunshine swept,
Dent Blanche's radiant cone, a trophy-tusk
Of some huge saurian, out-torn one day
By some primeval Anak rude in play;
Then Schallhorn's slighter grace, with Gäbelhorn,
And Dent d'Herens, beset with shrouded spurs
'Neath ever-melting, never-melted snows.

Then swimming on the vision, bold and large
The monolith of hermit Matterhorn,
Lean anchorite of mountains, nakedly
Exposed to all the spite of wrathful heavens,
A gaunt Stylites on his pillar gray,
That in scarped precipices rises sheer
Midst wide unfriendly glaciers desolate;
An obelisk rough-hewn, grave Nature's sport,
Such as some wrathful genius of the Gnomes,
Some swift impatient Angelo of Elves,
Plying his furious hammer on the stone,

Might thus have battered lamely out, and left
Like Medicean tombs, half-finished, twice sublime.
How glooms the austere bareness of its pile!
How darkly palled in tragic memories!
Since Whymper with glad comrades clambering down
That baffling steep, so long the frank despair
Of Alpine cragsmen, high with triumph flushed
At his new victory o'er the desperate crag,
Speechless with horror saw his laughing friends
(Rope-bound as one for happier destiny)
Slip backward in their tracks, and in a flash
Shoot wildly down the headlong-bending cliff
Like boulders crashing towards the Schwarze sea;
Wide spread their fluttering hands across the ledge
In frantic clutches vainly wandering,
Till o'er the neighboring and deathful brink

Of utter precipice they drop like lead
A thousand quivering fathoms down, the while
The hoarse air murmurs in their dying ears,
And so make end, — a grievous end untimely.
Young, bold, and strong, but in their strength surprised,
They knew no more of youth or pleasing time.

Yet blame no blame for daring rash to death!
For while brave men have sons will deeds be done
That show the perilous mettle of bold sires;
And still the fearless is the nobler race,
Apter for life, and fitter for rude truth,
Prolific of such men as seek the pole,
Or brave the savage in hot Afric's glades,
Give law at home, or colonize new lands,
And carry Europe to the farthest Isles.
Of such a blood the youth will pluck the beard
Of wolfish death within his dabbled lair,

To get their way, laughing his threats to scorn;
And some he quickly slays, who else had died
Obscure in later painful beds at home;
But men are born enough to spare a waste
In heroes, whose far-shining names undimmed
Bound on the withering forehead of the time
Shall give it lustre to the latest age.

But last we hail the central Alpine group
That stands far-gazing on the battlements
Of that portentous wall, that, like a bruised
And wounded serpent, trails its tortuous length
From sovran Blanc to sombre Engadine, —
There stands and claims an old preëminence.
Its peerless giants towering o'er the clouds
Like armored soldiery in glittering rank,
Circle the Wispach valley round, and close
Its bastioned gorge with lines impregnable;
Then, throwing out a friendly hand snow-gloved,
To either side bind fast the double chain

Fore-named, in one colossal horseshoe curve
Bent round through miles of melancholy crag.

Here mass their force the Alpine monarchs,
Kingly all, and like great kings companionless.
Breithorn the first, his bold, unshrinking brow
Thatched thick with snows that whitely overhang
The swarthy face of his scarred precipices;
Castor and Pollux next, twin births of Time,
Old ere their Grecian counterparts were young,
Pure as the chosen Knights of Holy Grail,
In harness of the diamond-studded sleet;
Then mightier Lyskamm, Coryphæus huge,
Whose elephantine shoulders lightly bear
The cloud-gleaned harvest of a century's snows;
And last the Monte Rosa, whose tall spires
The sun first gilds when golden morning dawns,
And far Orion, through slow-rolling nights,
Descries as nearest to his seven-fold stars.

II.

THE MOUNTAIN.

Monte Rosa, queen of that large court of kings, —
Reigning but ruling not, since each is sole, —
In all-surpassing splendor keeps high state
Unceasingly ; about her pillared throat
She twines a mantle of caressing snow,
Wind-blown to ripples, like a shallow brook
That fleets along the pebbles, dimpling on, —
A cloth-of-silver robe that spotlessly
Along her ample shoulders drifts, and falls
In mazy folds and furrows infinite ;
Now clinging close and showing vaguely clear
The massive undulations of her form,
As 'neath its marble dress a statue's limbs ;
Now wandering freely off in careless wreaths,

Like those that round the wintry fences curl
In lines of shelter from the driving winds;
Then drifting on, her snows become a flood
Of draperies voluminous, a whirl
Of banks and hollows, copes of ruffled sleet
In unrestrained disorder trailing down,
And tossed in sparkling sheets of frozen foam
Tempestuously about her feet; so drape
Her mountain ruggedness, and kindly veil
The ravages of nothing-sparing time
Beneath a starry sheen of woven dews.

From Switzerland the mount escapes the vale
In gentle slopes, no rare height promising, —
Like rustic lad that setting out from home
His coming exaltation not forecasts, —
But soon puts on a more aspiring strain,
And swells in swift-succeeding waves its sharp
ascent
Of stony ridges; like a tumbling surge

When freshening breezes heap it wave on wave,
Arch springs from arch in boldly growing curve;
But presently subdues its hurried rise
As breathless with the pace, and stays awhile
Where streams of confluent glacier ease the grade;
But next, abruptly from the glacial plain,
Like some Cologne cathedral's cliff of gray
O'er the mean huts of petty villagers,
Upsprings its central mass, in wrinkled walls
Of many-weathered crag, oft broken through
And parted into various precipices
By the long glaciers grinding hardly down;
Here tower the cliffs in Gothic savagery
To heights announcing all their boundless pride
And scornful purpose, bearing in strong arms
A large plateau, where trackless snow-fields wide
Lie tranquilly outspread, and bright with sun,
Peaceful as meads Elysian seen in sleep;
And long, deep-drifted swales whose restless curves

Capricious bend in tempest-moulded lines;
And treeless glens, smooth-floored with sifted
snows,
Couched tenderly beneath the shaggy brows
Of darkling crags, dells for trim fairies' meet,
When 'neath pleased moons Titania calls the
rout,
Sure no intrusive foot will mar the tryst;
Succeed new cliffs again, whose rigid lines,
As sternly tense as fierce Ambition's face
Set to harsh ends, break grimly through the
crust,
And like tall pines that to the sun stretch up
Their arid tops from dank sun-starved ravines,
Strain on, as if the pitch already gained,
The giddy elevation, still were naught,
And still to rise were easy, since no thought
Of halt, no weary need of stay intrudes,
And even gravitation, long out-breath'd
Seems left for dead below; all sublimed

In one vast lift, and mighty bulk, and heap
Of rock and earth snow-vested all its changeless year.
Then finally two slender tapering spires
In dainty grace salute the sky, and crave
His company.
So gradually gains
The aspiring mount its vantage o'er the Swiss;
But bluffs the swart Italians roughly off
With an abrupt, stupendous precipice,
As if some planet-carving demiurge,
With one strong sweep of his resistless sword,
Had shorn the rock-ribbed framework of the globe
Clean through to centre, that the half-world fell
To lowest abyss; the other raised its front
A massive bastion, rampart measureless,
A tyrant and colossal barrier,
Fit parting of dissevered hemispheres.
Harshly it breaks across the gracious vales,

And prisons them darkly in, checks man and
beast,
And halts the light-winged birds in vagrant
flight,
Save the rare eagle on his level vans;
A wall so sheer no snow doth cleave to it,
No cleft-sown cedar mask its nakedness,
No hardy birch get root-hold in its seams;
Barely the many-fingered mosses cling,
Brown lichens curl, and fearless saxifrage
Shakes out its milky bells against the crag,
Where dainty-footed chamois lightly flash,
A living lightning, 'cross its unmoved face;
So deep its plunge, that half a measured league
Of reeling air not brushes to its base,
Where spire-tall pines as grasses seem to wave;
And from its dizzy brink, the traveler,
Swooning with fear, plucks back his hasty foot,
As if a mottled snake had stung it suddenly,
Or skulking death, in ambush 'neath the brim,

Caught at him sharply, calling loud his name.
In savage grandeur breaks the huge rock down
Abrupt, unbuttressed, undivided, black,
From the cold snow-line to warm haunts of men,
Then folds its feet about with velvet meads,
Where thick grass springs, and vineyards yield their grapes,
Brown hamlets nestle, tinkling goat-bells ring,
And soft-aired, verdurous valleys bend away
Toward orange groves, and where gray olives bud.

But far aloft the silent silvery peaks,
Swept round by tangled glaciers as an ocean isle
By swirling currents, o'er-survey the world
'Mid lifeless solitudes; nor know life's stir,
Save the lost chamois whistling for his herd,
Or when the starling in his noisy hosts
Makes migratory turmoil o'er the snow,
Or clanging storks from Scandinavian homes,

In flight for lands of mosque and groves of palm,
Rustle the silence with their rapid wings.
All else repeats the lonelier age, ere life
Was born; the thoughtless wind makes harp Æolian
Of the serrate crag, the avalanche falls,
The rock decays, and tumbles roaring down;
But voiceless are the wastes, where no man dwells,
Where bat nor bittern haunts, nor lone wild beast,
Whose dells are vacant of the cricket's song,
The cry of owl, or plaintive whippoorwill,
The sea-susurrus of the soughing pines,
And everywhere is deadness undisturbed.

For ages thus, dim with aerial mists,
Untouched of any soil of common earth,
Her radiant highness on a rock-hewn chair
Sits throned in guise imperial: her seat

Of no wrought porphyry's empurpled pride,
Nor polished marble rough with artist's thoughts.
But crumpled schists of gneiss, and protogine,
With mica's shining weakness flaked and seamed;
Nature's most coarse originals, untouched
Of nice refinements, ragged, rent, and stained,
And scribbled thickly o'er with mystic runes
That tell how from red fire they came, and how
Transformed afresh from sea, and how were raised,
Upon the swelling back of vapors strong,
How fixed in place, and shaped; legend most strange!
Which they who ran have read, scrawled large
In that barbaric tongue, wherewith — his mark —
The sloven time signs all his manual works.

Beneath, the ponderous mountain-pillar sinks
Its shaft, and adamantine strength far down

From glimpses of the ever-prying sun,
Night-piercing moon, or eye of watchful star,
Beyond discovered reaches of the mine,
Beyond the lowest gorge of ocean's floor,
To Pluto's murky realm and cave unvisited,
Where prisoned earthquakes shake their hideous bars,
And young volcanoes bubble gruesomely;
There rests the mount, its vast foundations braced
On that colossal arch whose sweeping span
O'ervaults the muttering lakes of central fire,
The flux and fume of windless inner seas
And molten bays still vexed incessantly.

Italian skies of deep untroubled blue
Thrice-dyed bind close their sapphire coronet
To Monte Rosa's alabaster brow.
The climates, all astray from guardian months,
Race up and down her sides capriciously,

Like truant children whiling out the time.
The gypsy clouds a-loitering mid the hills,
Strolling adventurers from the teeming sea,
Rehearse their shows before her, and discourse
Their evanescent pomp to her eternity;
Now pitch their roving tents on her large slopes,
Now trail their arrowy streamers from her tip, —
Pennons of coasting tempests still mast-down
The low horizon; now furl gray storm-caps
Round her pallid brow; or lifting, climb the cope
Of careless heaven to mock her envious heights
With higher cliffs of fog; then drooping low
In long pavilions stretch their lazy folds,
Soft canopies, above her lily head,
'Neath which she seems to lie reclined at ease,
Some stately daughter to a sceptred king,
Head leaned on hand in summer indolence,
And large fair limbs outstretched at length, half-draped
And half-displayed, while lights and shadows changefully,

Like furtive smiles from sleepy eyelids shed,
Play o'er her fields of snow; and reveries faint
Steal through her thoughtful heart in silentness;
Heedless as love of time, and what time brings,
And pure as Dian walking heaven alone.

Thicken the clouds, she hails the gathering fray,
And yields her queenliness to hordes of storm;
With sweet, cool breath conjures the vaporous throng,
Like wily Circe in her subtlety,
And of their pilfered spoil from every sea
She robs them cunningly, while they beguiled
Lie softly on her bosom; nor resents
Rude rain, nor hail, nor blasts of bullying winds,
That howl their bluster in her ice-hung caves,
Nor blow from lightning's arm, whose brand of flame
Smites on her streaming forehead brutally,
Cleaving her well-forged crags as woodman cleaves

A log with his keen axe ; throws trembling back
The bellowing thunder's harmless noise renewed
In deep reverberations from her walls ;
Lets slip the flying avalanche from its high
perch
Upon the rocks to stoop a feathery cloud
Of white-winged mischief on the smothered
meads ;
Or flings the fragments of her rended cliffs
With booming uproars to the lowest dell.
Herself as wild as any tempest born
Of the conceiving heaven's immingled airs,
Joins in the loud illimitable tumult
As one with elemental nature's self,
Not unscathed, but of the scath unreckful ;
And while the scowling rabble of low cloud
Spits out its snow-flakes to confederate winds,
Plucks in the fleecy waste to every cleft,
And craftily with shuttles of the blast
Weaves a new surface to her seamless robe,

Wherein, the storm withdrawn, she meets the day,
Serene as Juno on Olympus throned,
And sparkling more than night's unnumbered stars.

So Monte Rosa stands in empery,
And so has stood more slowly-pacing years
Than there are needles on the branching pine,
Holding a winter in perpetual fee;
With naught of change save waste, and weathering;
Cloud, calm, and sun her sole vicissitudes.
Nor ever could the tardy spring here find
A fruit-tree grown to hang her blossoms on,
Nor summer leaves to shade her burning eyes,
Nor could boy autumn shake a browning nut
From any copse within her terraces.
Sparse arctic plants, children of ancient cold,
About her glaciers' lip hang small and weak,

Left orphans here, belated in the flight
Their comrades made, upon the ragged skirts
Of the decaying ice-cape once thick-wrapt
About the shivering shoulders of the North.
But on her bossy uplands plays no child,
Nor human generations dare advance
Their monuments amid her dateless pinnacles.
Coldly she keeps her virgin court, nor heeds
Of all revolving earth's far-ranging course,
And punctual circuit through sun-governed skies.

III.

THE GLACIER.

THE miser Winter banks unbounded hoards
Of silvery snows locked fast in wards of frost
On Monte Rosa's stronghold; there, with clutch
Of unrelaxing fingers stiff for cold,
Holds them well-guarded lest the spendthrift hours
Of lavish Summer filch the treasured store.
Deeply he dreads the prowling föhn-wind's breath,
Deeply, the sun's sly ray unscrupulous,
And stealthy depredations of gray rains.
But misers' hoards oft fall to gentle heirs,
And flow to human uses; so these snows,
So keenly guarded, o'er-amassed in time

By often robberies of the traveler-clouds,
And heaped to surfeit crowd their rocky bounds,
Then squeezing through the niggard's full-crammed fist,
Steal off unhindered down a choked ravine
Dug through the mountain's midmost scaurs, wherein
To crystal ice transformed by magic wand
Of laughing fairies in the sunbeams hid,
They join the laggard glacier's secular march,
Which, like calm planets, knows nor haste nor rest.

This glacier stream, compact of welded snows,
A flowing solid of translucent ice,
Brims to its verge a flinty gorge; there lies
In silence sunning its unwieldy bulk,
A strange frost-dragon in steel-gleaming scales
Coiled close the crags between in many a fold,
And sinuous curve, and glancing, fretful ring,

Like Norseman's Fafnir, serpent shrewd and foul
That gloats above the Niblung's ruddy gold.
A monster vast and vague, whose horrent spines,
The nodding séracs on his bended neck,
Tall-bristling as a feudal city's towers,
Give show of kindling anger; whose blue mouths,
A thousand grim crevasses, spread their jaws
Like ghastly graves in wait for living men.
In his rock-riven lair he lies supine,
Groaning by turns, as gorged with heavy food;
And seeming motionless secretes his dull intent,
But inches on unnoticed, vale-ward bound,
Tricked thither falsely by the sun's bright lure.

A Protean changeling, much he masquerades,
Eluding quest along his devious way:
First spreads abroad a thresher's level floor,
Then in long rigid swells gray ocean mocks,

And further winds his train in strenuous curves,
A winter highway deeply groined by wheels,
About some cape of crag, or headland bold
Thrust sharply on its path; then staggering down
A short declivity, one ruffled coil
Disparts its glittering scales, that flinging back
The sun betrays the reptile on his way;
But next he crushes through a steep defile,
Where with convulsive struggles cleaves his back
In gulfy chasms, abysses bottomless,
Ragged and tossed, as had an earthquake turned
In restless sleep beneath his brittleness:
Here, toppling icebergs lift their glassy cliffs;
There, well-squared blocks huge as the slave-cut stones
Of building Pharaohs, or tumbled wreck
Of walls Cyclopean, old Mycenæ's pride;
One bright confusion, turgid anarchy;

While still as sleeping crocodile by reedy Nile,
That basking in the sunshine sleepeth long,
The sluggard keeps his journeying unbetrayed.

But reaching suddenly the frightful brink
Of a sheer precipice, the glacier halts
As stiff with horror, all its steely spines
Erect in regiments of glancing pikes and spears
And bayonets of broken soldiery,
Dismayed by rumors of an unseen foe,
And fixed in wild disorder as they stand.

But when the moonlight sheds elusive gleam
Upon these frigid fantasies, the wan-faced throngs
Stand ghastly horrible, a maniac rout
Of graveyard ghosts by one mad impulse seized,
An eerie throng of goblins, phantoms, weirds,
All leaning guilty forward bent for home,
But caught untimely in their panic-flight

By toll of matin bells, and cock's shrill crow
In the cool break of dawn, and petrified
Upon their ghostly track; silent as tombs,
Save when some glimmering tower, driven secretly
Beyond his poise, goes crashing down the steep,
A world of icy ruin as it flies,
And clangs the plausive echoes with its din.

But still thrust on by ever-crowding snows,
Held in cold durance on the mountain's top,
The unwilling Python leaps the bitter verge,
And falls a weltering ruin in the abyss;
There shattered into fragments trails along,
A cataract of riven torsos, limbs,
And mangled men in marble, as had here
Great Athens dashed her sculptured failures down
From this unfaned Acropolis; or say,
A lava-flow of lucent mother-o'-pearl

In lava-torture writhing as it runs;
A soundless cascade, death-struck Niagara,
Or else Niagara's rapid ere the fall,
Seized in grand rush of all its racing floods,
Its waterspouts, its flinging jets of foam,
Struck in mid-volley by the trancing breath
Of zero cold; that fierce flow frozen, all swirls
Congealed, each furrowed rill, each glassy drop,
And every rainbow bubble caught surprised
At top of speed, and crystaled as it flew;
While here and there a leaning Pisa-tower,
Mid-rapid left, stands strangely eminent
Amid its shattered compeers, rooted fast
Within its treacherous base.

Thus wounded, torn
At surface; but deep down the wily worm
Has kept his swollen body whole and sound;
All fresh and unconcerned and fearlessly
He holds his headstrong course to that low vale
For which he started half an age ago.

The ice-fall past, the glacier gathers in
His shivered members, smooths his furrowed face,
And spreads again in fair expanse of field,
A fruitless glebe no plowshare ever rends,
No sower sows with seed, though lying plane,
And well-bestead with limpid boiling springs,
With here and there a lakelet blue, and large
As a circus ring, whose depths untenanted
See never minnow herding in its pools,
Nor swift-finned pike dart on the silly dace,
Nor painted trout surprise the gilded fly,
But peacefully the prisoned waters smile
Within their sea-green bowls of carven ice,
Fit goblets for great Thor and Odin great
When wandering from dim Asgard in the North
They raised the hunt amid archaic hills;
Pellucid meres, whose baby wavelets low
Break softly on the sharp, unpebbled marge,
Where greens no sedge, nor music-making rush,
No cress, nor water-loving flag, nor mint,
Nor odorous lily brave in white and gold.

By night the ice-sheet lies as dead with cold,
But sunrise brings the pulse of life to it;
For rustling through its pores like wind in corn,
Millions of new-born rills begin to drip
With myriad morning-murmur musical,
And stir its pulses with first throbs of life.
The drops to rills, the rills to rivulets fill,
And these to brooks, that wax to dashing streams;
The streams uniting into torrents swell,
That smoke along their course with rocket-speed,
Grooving deep sluice-ways in the dripping ice
Veined like an agate, and of such bright gleam
As shines from polished marble touched with sun
Upon its watery brilliance, seen thus fair
At new St. Paul's outside the Roman walls.
Here, coffined all alive, the bubbling floods,
Swifter than storm-blown birds that fleetly skim
To leeward down a gale, slip down their runs,
Clashing their cymbals in melodious haste,

And pause no instant in the breathless course,
Until they reach the Moulin's gloomy pit,—
A witch's well of blackest mystery
Bored through the glacier's breast to soundless depths,
And weirdly hung with looped and torn ice-fringe,
And ragged icicles about its lip;
Here gleefully bounds in the ramping flood
'Mid shrilling echoes from the straitened walls,
Breathing its watery smoke to heaven, then hides
In hollow caves by cold enchantments bound,
Nor sparkles into sunshine thence for many days.

Far down the gorge the glacier welters on,
Out-breathing death wherever points its tongue,
While on it grows nor tree nor smallest shrub,
Nor bird gives voice, nor ever any beast
Goes down to graze there, nor doth insect glean

His morsel-meal from its dull barrenness;
But in its bosom lies the chamois dead,
Entrapped, fond brute! in some unblest crevasse,
With travelers pale, and o'er-adventurous guides
Snatched from the crest of life's most happy hour
To this long sleep and hated sepulchre.
And on its bosom tombs the errant bee,
And silly butterfly encrystaled there,
By sunshine traitored in a flowery quest,
Where never flower blossomed, nor shall bloom;
And on its sluggish back it hales away
Great loads of mountain spoil in smutty lines
Of black moraine, the shapeless wreck and shred
Of grand old crags, and beauteous peaks, whose strength
It slowly ruins, — slave that slays its king.
A belt of Arctic cold, it crowds between

The fields where gracious summer glows,
Pushing its devastations to the end;
Then, foully burrowing 'neath stone and earth,
Is slain in secret by the assassin Sun,
Whose treacherous lure hath brought it down so low;
Yielding its life-blood in a moaning stream,
The tawny Wisp whose torrent floods make haste
To drown their clamor in the leaping Rhone.
But, daily slain, the glacier daily fills
The rock-sown glen with echoing currents loud,
That fuller flow the more the dog-star burns,
Gladdening the meadows of remotest men
With benefactions sprung they know not whence,
And haply care not in their indolence.
So every snow-flake wrung from Winter's hand,
And miser-grasp, finds its old home, — the sea,
And frolics on the surge, whence in a cloud
By false Ixion, that seducer Sun,
'T was ravished willingly so long ago.

Oh! happy we, whose brief and page of life
On kindlier reaches of remembered time
Is written, when but degenerate broods
Of pristine monster-glaciers gall the hills;
Nor know, as our unknown forefathers knew,
His deadly greatness, when one ice-sheet wrapped
His vast of body round each isolate peak,
And trailed a mighty octopus his hundred arms
And loathy tentacles of horrid death
Across the fertile acreage, then gorged
The valleys with his slimy hulk, and crawled
Supinely o'er the hill-sides for his prey;
Winning the reindeer from cold Norway down,
And woolly mammoth with their vanished mates,
That craved perpetual winter for its cold.
How groaned the land beneath his frigid bulk!
How fled skin-clad barbarians affright!
Their pastures buried, wattled huts o'erturned,
And hunting grounds laid waste, nor dared return

For drear immeasurable millenniums,
Till wounded grievously the glacier lay, —
Fafnir by solar Siegfried deeply cloven, —
A dragon shriveled, spent, and shrunken back
To his high mountain fastnesses, half-dead,
Mere fossil of his prime, and mummied corse
Of that prodigious spoiler whose foul length
O'erlay this realm with universal blight,
And hideous leagues of body unassoiled.
But now in his abandoned ranges wide
Men plant their vines, and drink the blood of grapes,
Build sunny homes, and reap their grains in peace,
So long as he returns to scathe no more.

IV.

ST. THEODULE.

BENEATH dark Breithorn's beetling brow, 'twixt that
And rearing Matterhorn, St. Theodule
Bends graciously its snow-white neck, as when
The laggard ox stoops low his tranquil head
To take the yoke; so forms a crescent pass
In that forbidding wall, which otherwise
Imprisons Zermatt the streamy in its guard.
Thence on clear days, when noon pours its steep light
On the white wonder of the Rosa's snows,
The mount displays its glories unsurpassed.
Set like a castle mastered of great drifts,
And buried half beneath them, — while its lords

Are gone, and gone its ladies all, it stands
Corner to a supernal masonry,
Whose uncoursed crag within its hollow ring
Begirds the Gorner glacial circus round,
Building a matchless amphitheatre —
So large 't would dwarf Rome's Colosseum
To a feaster's bowl, — with glacier paved,
And terraced to the clouds with bank on bank
Of trailing glaciers, crystal, undefiled.
Here seems as if the word were given
To deck a fitting court for that assize
Delayed so long, when risen men should stand
In their simplicity before the throne,
The great white Throne which scarce shall shine
more bright
Than these broad snows beneath this midday sun.

Here Breithorn, the surpliced Twins, and Lyskamm
With Monte Rosa ranged, — unbroken choir

Of voiceless singers, choral to the eye,
One giant picture form, at one glance swept
From crown to base, from base to dazzling
crown,
A silver splendor, seat of innocence.
Each dark-faced precipice, each slender spire,
And every craggy cape and shadowy bay,
Are boldly marked amid wide, crusted snows,
Whose lustre blinds a quadrant of the sky;
Their tireless roods of heaven-encroaching line
Aspiring to the zenith threat the stoop,
And quivering curve of azure firmament,
That bends a lover's pace beyond their tips;
Their glory, vastness, strength in deep repose,
Tower in such near horizon, so sublime
That Nature stands astonished, blinded, dazed,
Amid imperial glories still her own.

Here one refulgent morning, after days
Of storm, when hosts of thoughtless clouds had
flung

Discarded snows on every bossy hill,
Chanced a good bishop from a western see,
A man athletic for his years and work,
Who held great Nature dear, and not too much
Accursed by her Creator's word of haste,
When Adam "took and ate." Here, toiling on
O'er the high level of St. Theodule,
Whose unvexed slope as polished ivory shone,
The dazzling spectacle immense and pure,
Its all-unrivaled, immemorial grace
Stirred his grave soul to ecstasy divine,
That so he stood quite still, and called his guides,
Those hardened veterans in such sceneries,
To check their swinging steps, and bare their heads
With him in holy reverence, while each,
As each had learned at mother's knee, re-said
In his own native speech the Lord's great prayer,
Our Father, which in Heaven art (as chanced
A psalm in triple tongue), to testify

Transcendent gratitude to God most high,
For such amazing glory at its full.

So stood he with the astounded hill-men there,
Like some primeval Druid in his woods,
Head bared, and lifted hands outspread toward
heaven,
His white hair floating on the idle breeze,
Adoring ancient Nature — goddess dear,
And mother of all worships 'neath the sun —
With deep, ancestral reverence, ere he knew
Her gracious cult behind its thin disguise:
Stirring the wintry waste with such a voice
Of transport as his high cathedral roof
Had seldom echoed from its fretted vault.

V.

MILAN.

A STRANGER once at Milan loitering
Throughout a leaden day, fatigued at last
With the rich city's treasures, — jewels, shrines,
Ivories, and pictures, and the Iron Crown, —
I turned my steps to the Duomo's fane,
The hour before the dimmed Apollo drove
His drowsy team below the western wave.
Thence through the incense fumes, and past the priest
Droning his dolorous chant, I mounted
Up to the pinnacled and saint-thronged roof,
And saw the vesper city dim beneath,
And nothing more, and felt the world was small and mean.

But suddenly the clinging vapors, touched
By chill of gaining night, swept back their folds,
And opened all-glorious Nature to her depths.
Like all the immortal gods, the white-cliffed Alps,
A full Olympus of divinities,
Towered high in sunny grandeur on the north,
And Monte Rosa, like great Hera, first.
Upon her swart and dreadful precipices
A deeply-moving beauty delicately shed,
And in her dusky vales a tender glow
Of purpling atmospheres, that royally
Bathed crag and buttress and each shaggy spur,
And softened all rough outlines into grace;
But on her fulgent spires such light ineffable
As makes men sigh to share her heavenly heights,
Their fadeless pleasure, and unchanging calm.
A lotus land of pensive afternoons,
A garden of Hesperides, whose close
The gold-haired daughters of the kingly sun

Kept carefully, where fear, nor night, nor death
Could come, nor winter fall for all its snows;
But where the palm might lift its plumy fronds,
The peacock burn, the slim gazelles find rest,
And all rare things the gloaming hollows hold.

Then sank the sun, and saffron grew to pink
Upon the flushing snows, till spire and dome
And every silver valley filled with fire;
And like a heavenly rose upon the sky
The well-named Rosa blossomed full and large,
And flung her blushes to the eastern clouds,
And far across gray earth, and crowned the heavens
With more than many roses' loveliness.

Then gathering fire the rock itself did burn,
A flameless pillar, red Arabian gold,
Or ruddy coral from Pacific seas,
Built to a dreamer's palace looming warm

In dreamer's whirl of lawless fantasy
Against the darkening twilight, such no poet
sang,
Or e'er shall truly sing as it deserves.

Then fading slow, as fled the truant sun,
Failed to such flowery hues, and ravishing,
As o'er shy spring's ambrosial orchards roll
In fold on fold of odorous April bloom,
Where white and pink contend for mastery,
And now the pink is all, and now the white,
But lovely, dainty, pure, and delicate
Beyond compare; as if the dewy eve
Had touched the rude rock's flinty heart, and set
Unwonted juices leaping in its veins
And hardened pulses, till it smiled in flowers.

But paler grew against the growing dusk,
Till carven cloud it feigned, yet more than cloud,
Of subtler line than cloud could ever draw;

Rather say, a rigid wave of chiseled foam,
A swollen tempest-surge, with dimples dark,
Liquid jets, and melting bulbs translucent
Turned to stone, and fixed in air so loftily,
It seemed the roof and parting of the world.
With sight of its unfailing strength, men's hearts
Wax strong, and in its restfulness find peace.
And so it stood until the jealous Sun
Drove off in anger, taking all his beams,
And left the world to darkness unrelieved.

But everywhere a subtle sorcery
Prevails; the mountain charm subdues all change
Of changeful nature to itself unchanged.
Splendor of sun, or pallor of chill moon,
Dawn's tranquil gold, eve's afterglow of fire,
Stillness like sleep, or roar of hindered storm,
But magnify, not mar, her majesty;

While all the wearing years that waste the world,
And human hearts as well, but little win
From that high grace wherein it pleases God
To keep his mountain standing for a time.

BOOK SECOND.

I.

THE ASCENT.

But not at Monte Rosa's foot appalled
Need men sit cowed, while envious of her heights.
A clever cragsman, sound of limb and bold,
May stoutly dare the snow, the ice, the crag,
And push his clamber till he stand supreme
On the sharp tip, a blunted needle's point,
And zone the world with solitary gaze.

While earth yet sleeps within that shadow cool
Of her own body, which men call The Night,
Strides forth the alert and girded mountaineer,
With clattering heels that worry all the house,
Across the friendly threshold of the auberge

Crowning the Riffel's brim high o'er Zermatt.
With him go brave companions and bold guides,
And toilsome porters carrying food and gear,
Stalwart, stout-hearted Swiss, of that unflinching race
So true to duty though the worst impend,
Who mostly die, slain by these ruffian crags,
Yet none the more desert them, but defy.
Keen Alpine axe in hand, and shoulder ringed
With coil of trusty rope, whereon may hang
All lives, ere day is done, the men fare forth
Across the scanty sward, whose downward stoop
Misgives the coming toil with short-lived ease;
See the large constellations burning bright,
The Milky Way's high bridge and trembling mile,
Between the antlered foreheads of the hills,
That bar the dusk horizon solemnly
Against the lonely magic of the night.
How ghostly looms the all-dispeopled world!

How haunted its wide silence steeped in dark!
Sombre and dull, oppressed with lingering sleep,
They stumble mid the pathless shingle, where
The glow-worm lantern throws a sickly ray
That darkens darkness with its wavering flame.
Then soon they skirt columnar Riffelhorn,
Whose guilty rock, like many a taller Alp,
Has slain its man without remorseful sign;
Then leap upon the Gorner glacier's floor,
Whose stationed flood, a solid Amazon,
Lies naked to the stars in pulseless sleep,
And plod along in angry wonderment
That men should waste their drowsy, restful morns
In such emprise to climb a foolish hill.
But ere their lagging feet have paced its breadth,
Behold! the Bedouin Night strikes his brown tent,
And swift of foot slinks subtly down the west
Before a cool, thin light, that drives its hastening wave

Beneath the stars, and quells their eager eyes.
The sickle-moon flings forth one keener flash
(As Dian angered at her near eclipse),
Then fades to withered cloud, and less than
cloud.
Meanwhile the cheery Day begins to light
Within the smoky caves of eastern mists
His earlier fires; feebly they glimmer first,
A low white dawn with faintest breeze astir, —
Then faintly reddening steal from fog to
fog
Uncertainly, as when betimes aroused
A camping hunter lights a brush-heap stored
In some rock-chimney, feebly curls the flame,
Half lost in smoke along the cold, green wood,
And scarce gives sign if it will win or no.
But striking up the hill and cope of heaven,
Auroral streamers dash the gauzy scud,
That floats so high it seems beyond the air,
With spray of saffron pale, that ripples wide

Till all the dusky east is swept with wave
Of daffodil transpierced with twinkling stars.
Then heaps exultant Morn his gaining fires,
And flings their glowing embers far abroad
Upon the folded cloud-rack palled in gloom
Upon the dense horizon, kindling it
Like summer thatch with swift access of flame,
And penciling its fretful caverns with hues
That shame the gold and scarlet-painted woods,
When autumn frost to rainbow fires their green;
Then higher still piles Day his furnaces,
Till with fierce lustres running swift as thought
Through maddened crowds, he flies along the mists,
And burns in tranquil conflagration pure,
Intense, and vaster than wide prairies show,
When red men light the grass; but noiselessly,
As step of spring o'er beds of sweet arbutus,

Flames and glows through all the curtained vapors
Hung arow 'bove unresponsive snow-fields
Ghastly pale, till heaven is paved like gold
With level leagues of incandescent cloud,
That blazing fiercely still blaze unconsumed.
Then last the Orient Sun, Day's joyful lord,
His silver lances held on high before,
Extends his sceptre to the stooping hills,
Now bending lowly toward his changeless seat,
As vassal earth on fervid axis whirls;
And loosing all his meteors into air,
Than star-showers brighter when the night is full,
Than snow-flakes thicker when the squall is fierce,
Fulfills the immeasurable gulfs of space
With glancing lights and flakes of living fire,
As were no end to his still wasting store,
And brings the dear familiar daylight back,
And all things dear to happy men with it.

Now speed the sunny meteors, flock on flock,
Swifter than winter-shunning birds, and fly
In arrowy lines to Monte Rosa's tip
Of flushing stone, lighting in myriads.
Legions more on soundless unreturning wing,
Bear down to the grim brotherhood of peaks
All sombre still with night's cold loneliness,
And cheer their drearihead with day's new smile.
Still following myriads, without a pause,
Drop flitting, gay invaders down each cliff,
Whose wrinkled eld they mask in veils of rose;
Brush the wan snow plains with an alien gold;
Sweep quickly off the webs of silver rime,
By frolic night-folk spun in highland dells
For their light sports; unseal frost-fettered rills,
And pierce the heavy eyes of herdsmen lone,
And maids undaunted on the upland meads,
Where breezy summer long they tend their kine,
For humble wealth, though lean return of curds;
Cloud-girt as Jove on Ida, dim to men

As sailors ice-embargoed near the pole,
And deaf to thund'rous tides of that great world
Ringed broadly round their feet, whose loud events
Break noiselessly 'neath those unheeding heights.

But still unspent, the ever-squandering sun
Scatters new lights that loiter not, but swarm
In sparkling legions on the denser clouds,
Still massed unstirred between the lower cliffs,
In counterfeit of such an ice-jammed stream
As chokes Norwegian fiords; when strangely rent
The solid-seaming floe dissolves its bonds,
And rolls its mocking icebergs lightly off
In buoyant fleets of wind-tossed fugitives
(The full-sailed argosies of airy bays),
Up each warm slope and into cooler skies.

But though morn calls, no living thing bestirs
Amid the graceless crags, no sweet lark sings,

No chippering swallow skims the frosty air,
No marmot whimpers, bleats no tender kid,
Nor hums a beetle from his hammock flower;
But silently the tawny sunshine gives,
And silently the grisly rocks receive,
The wondrous transformation of the dawn.

And still the saffron meteors thicklier swarm
Than sparks from blacksmith's anvil when he smites
The glowing bar, and swarming burst above
The snowy gates, and pour their multitudes
Adown the shadowy valleys, till they rouse
The darkest gorges with the glance of morn.
Then all the dewy lowlands smoke and steam,
Swift cascades glitter, cattle rise and feed,
And sober-visaged Switzers, young and old,
Drift out from chalets quaintly carved with flowers
And pious legends, brown, deep-eaved, and low,

And firmly anchored 'neath stone-ladened roofs,
To early toils of far-resplendent day.

Meanwhile our cragsmen, now beyond the wave
Of the great Gorner glacier, break the fast
Of fasting guides on "auf der Platte's" rock,
Which lies ice-girdled where begins the steep.
Thence small as flies, and slow as horned snails,
Cheered by the sun, their father in the flesh,
They pant along the snow-crust, full of life,
'Mid the pale death of Arctic sceneries,
And landscapes bare as scientific faiths;
Such know the dreary souls in Labrador,
And polar bears round Greenland's glaciered coast:
For Nature greets men here with savageries,
Offers no flowers, nor fruit, nor song of waking birds,
No mossy grove, nor hardship-scorning pine,
Nor place for rest, nor safety by the way;

And though attired in white of virgin nun,
With face of saintly beauty, yet malign
Her heart, and, her kind motherhood renounced,
She seems step-mother strange, austere, and cold,
But for man's ruin ready every hour,
And to his anxious life indifferent
As belted Saturn in his blameless sphere.

Now up steep bossy sides of crusted snow,
Night-chilled to hardness, fit to bear their weight,
Their creaking steps ascend without a pause, —
A trifling climb, were this the way of all.
Rope-bound in line, lest some snow-screened crevasse
Trip some unguarded foot, they wind along
Like doubling Reynard when the hounds give chase:
Now lightly leap a maze of glacier chasms,

Now, faces downward, crawl o'er wider gulfs
On thin snow bridges, frail as life in age,
Frozen o'er the blue and bottomless crevasse,
Where even the summer lying lies a-cold,
And that sharp trapper Death keeps set his springs
To catch the rash transgressor unaware.
Now tangled in a net-work of wide pits
They wander dubiously, no outlet found;
Or issuing thence dismayed behold their course
Decoying where the unharnessed avalanche
Runs down its trampling herds of startled snows,
And breathless flit across it one by one,
Afraid to speak, lest any sound stampede
Its deadly multitudes; then lies their path
Where *séracs* huge, and nodding to their fall,
Lean toppling o'er an ice-slide's polished face,
To hurtle down anon in fragments fierce
With lonely clangor; or, on crossing this
Like timid hares athwart the scent of hounds,

And taking to the cliff, they escalade
Its gnarled and guttered roughness, on its wall
Bruising their tender flesh, on its immensity
Embarked like nautilus with his frail sail
On the large surge of ocean's liquid round;
Now creep they quivering up a narrow shelf,
Where squirrel scarce could run his pretty track;
Now cling by thinnest crevices where fingers, toes,
Pinched bloodless in the crannies, barely hold;
Then crowd up some close chimney in the cliff
(No sooty sweep to narrower flues compelled),
Where ice-paved walls, smooth and precipitous,
Defy an essaying, save for notches cleft
By lusty axe-cuts of untiring guides;
Glued to the palisade, with desperate clutch
Of taloned rock-swallows hanging by their nests,
They crush and squeeze along, or up or down
Or anywhere, as chance allows, unsure
Even so of outcome fortunate to toil.

Sometimes in deadliest peril they evade
As by a miracle a rattling hail,
And furious cannonade of bowlders huge,
Shrill-humming stones, and tons of whizzing ice,
Dread salvos of a foe's artillery,
Discharged by skulking frost-imps overhead,
Who, keeping sleepless sentry all the year,
With these malignant volleys fend the ledge.

And so our travelers moil, and trudge along,
Panting for breath, with trembling knees, athirst
And faint, hands bleeding from the sharp-edged
rocks,
And tired hearts knocking 'gainst their seated
ribs;
Till, one cliff conquered, on its saw-like ridge
They sit secure, and gazing proudly down, —
Like daring boys astride a roof-tree keen,
And perilous to hold, or leave; not long,
For soon they find the sturdy ice-clad spikes
Make cause of quarrel to their younger flesh;

Though fondly clasped with more than lover's
warmth,
They give them welcome cold as foeman's steel.

But thus at last they overtake and win
The "Saddle's" windy seat conspicuous,
And camp them down for breathing-space and
food,
Indifferent lunch o'ertouched with wild surmise;
For glancing 'cross the abysmal glacier-bed
Stretched far beneath them at a dizzy depth,
They mark great Lyskamm's shelving precipice,
That fronts them opposite, in black dismay,
A thrilling type of dangers all their own;
But vaunting still a prowess none the less
Than doughtier cragsmen boast, who still have
dared,
And conquered Lyskamm in his awfulness,
They draw not back, but brace their souls anew,
As men whom threats refresh, and re-resolve
To hale their quarry home, whate'er betide.

Useless the feat and dire the useless toil,
With trivial recompense for time waylaid!
And why should men but delicately bred,
With soft white hands woo labors so austere,
And peril thus their world for one grand hour
Of martial conflict with intrepid Death?
Why? But that we are children of rude sires,
And with ancestral humors o'er-infused;
In us old ardors burn, wild instincts thrill,
Of our own will and motive innocent,
Which dim forefathers from their graves be-
queath.
As they were hunters, herdsmen, warriors bold,
We living in their flesh crave open fields,
Bleak hills and streams, dark woods and aim-
less toils.
Their habits strong, the customs of wild years,
Lurk deeply lodged in our less brutish strain,
And wake to hunt us now afield, and now
To sail far seas, or raise all-risking wars,

And even to invent new dangers in our zest,
That so our dainty nerves may leap and thrill
With those fierce shivers of delight wherein
Our unhoused sires did spend their stormy lives.
Here in the wilderness we find old homes,
Ancestral acres lapsed but for a time,
Abandoned playmates now rejoined to claim
Our forfeit part in them inherited
From childhoods lost in dusky centuries
Of mouldered sires re-born again in us.
The mount, the moor, night, snow, and steep-
built crag,
With all that puts sweet life at threat'ning odds,
Though yesterday acquaintances of ours,
Come to us thus as oldest proven friends
And dear antagonists invincible,
From our unbreeched progenitors, who knew
And brothered them all so long ago;
And dying left their turbulent comradeship,
A true love-gift, a blood inheritance,

A legacy within our members hid
Of rippling nerve that leaps when dangers press,
A bandit craving for a bout with death,
Ourselves the priceless stake, — 'gainst nothing!
And here on this bare crag we drink hilarity
In deep ancestral cups, and wassail keep
With fresh, bright air, that like a rustic wine
Intoxicates; with sunshine, boisterous wind,
Large sky, free space, and blood that riotously
Invades the swollen veins; the sense supreme
Of needless dangers met, defied, disdained,
And life exalted to an epic feat.
How tame, how poor unspeakably, the lot
Of travelers wheel-bound to dusty roads,
And dismal safety! their only care to dine
Deliciously; their stern ambition then
Another day to drive, and dine as well.

But sport and jest here bubble gayly forth,
And laughter as of boys on holiday,

Makes life elate and young; while each one still
Ignores the unfinished furlongs' dreadful steep,
And drunk with pleasure dreams no dream of
fear.
Then leap they to their feet again, refreshed,
And like Odysseus on Ægean seas,
Unsated with old pains and perils now foregone,
Stand gladly forth to seek adventures new.

Now falls a wildering mist, some rambling cloud,
And now a driving shower, thick mountain dew,
And then a dusty snow-flaw chokes the air
With pale frost-orchids, fluttering thickly down,
Breeding sharp winter in those summer skies;
While Boreas blows his strident Alpine horn
About their ears with thought-confusing din,
And sings his ancient jocund jödel to the crag.
Then swift returns the sun in withering strength,
Turning December back to hot July,
And melting tired limbs with swooning heats.

All weathers flit about the indifferent cliff,
Like martins round their summer-haunted eaves,
And flutter forth in weaving interchange,
Now cheerful, now severe, or wet, or dry,
Or hot, or cold, or gusty, or serene.
Mayhap a little cloud, mere cap-full of light fog,
Is gendered where they climb, and thunders born
Of the quick-curdling mist growl furiously
With voices leonine about their steps,
While snaky lightnings hissing round their heads
From cloud to rock, dart forth their forkéd threats,
As were the mountain spirits roused to guard
Their shrines invaded by intrusive guests.

Or should such awful chance befall, more dread
And worse than worst of that which coward fear
Had forecast of, on some steep snow-side caught,

Midway to perch of safety while they haste,
A sudden crack as of a pistol fired
Cleaves the still air with warning ominous,
That chills the blood within their startled heart.
And while they pause a breath in vague surmise,
Their foothold strangely sinks a little space,
Then swiftly slips, then slides amain, and then,
Dragged downward with an awful, mighty rush,
Fast and still faster with a torrent's speed,
They pour along the steep no more as men,
But things, mere driftwood in a freshet flood,
Or tossing wreckage in a tempest surf,
Blinded and stifled with an icy dust,
Stunned by the thunderous roar, whirled now aloft,
And now engulfed beneath the foamy snow,
In the living avalanche devoured quick,
They slide, ah luckless coasters! headlong down

Towards some high brink, whence the abyss
yawns sheer.
No breath for words! no time for thought! no
place
For eager muscle! guides, companions, all
O'ermastered in the unconquerable drift,
In Nature's grasp held powerless, atoms
Of her insensate frame, they fare as leaves
In the dark rush of wild November gales,
Or desert sands in the hot simooms' fell play;
One gasp for breath, one strangled bitter cry,
And the wild snow closes smothering in,
And moulds their forms with icy lines about,
And crushes life out, and entombs them there,—
Nobler than kings Egyptian in their pyra-
mids,
Embalmed in the mountain mausoleum,
And part of all its grand unconsciousness
Forever.
Its still dream resumes the mount,

The sun his brightness keeps, for unto them
The living men are naught, and naught the dead,
No more than snows that slide, or stones that roll.

But voiding this, the extreme catastrophe,
Our mountaineers make good their dangerous way ;
Though sore of foot, and with the snow-glare dazed,
Their foreheads fretted with the prickly sweat,
They lag upon the path, and loiter slow.
Now joy departs, and grim endurance comes,
Unflinching Spartan trained to take the worst.
Oft crave they halt, and oft their mutinous eyes
Accuse the unstooping summit, still so high.
Give wings, the Andean condor's vasty stroke!
Or thews, the nimble chamois' legs of steel!
To clear exultantly the arduous space,

That mocks them laggards, and derides their
march.
In vain! no Jove-sent eagle stoops his flight,
As once for love to fair-limbed Ganymede,
From circles empyrean to their aid;
From far Arabia no genii haste
To waft them through divided airs on high.
Their staggering muscles still must strain,
Of their own blood must courage spring;
And soon, for lo, the greatest horror last!
Danger undreamed of, monstrous, measure-
less!
The final *Arête*, the toothed and shaggy rib
Of that sky-piercing spire, that from the base
So delicate and dainty smooth appeared,
Uprears its ragged length, — the only path.
Scarce Strasburg's tower more perilous to
climb!
A bent, keen-pointed scimitar of crag
Set upright on its hilt, with scant an edge

More broad than Moslem's bridge to Paradise,
And deeply gashed in elemental wars,
It cuts the clouds, and cleaves compacted storms.
Above our climbers' heads so dizzily
It reaches on, and on, beyond weak sight,
Flouting poor skill, and cooling braggart
tongues.

Who shall attempt that fanged and serrate rim?
Who wrestle death on that perfidious wedge,
Sleet-mailed and bitten by the vicious winds?
Who scale that footless perch, a crazy stair
For suicides and angered souls
Of life a-weary? Clear half a thousand feet
Of panic peril, either frenzied flank,
A pitiless, nerve-shaking precipice,
Shoots down to lancet-pointed rocks, a bed
Of heartless cheer to him who falls. Well now
May weaklings quail, for boldest mountaineers
Of earlier centuries turned their backs

On this grim devil's ladder, whence one slip
Were quick perdition, and the last; but so
They left to better-metaled Englishmen
The shining hour of those who dare and win.

Yet now the stalwart shoulders of a guide
Will bear the timid o'er it, if one choose
To save his courage for brave hours of talk.
But few will flinch where hardier souls lead on.
Stolid with old resolve our comradeship,
Their faces set as flint and hearts as hard,
All wordless grasp that thin hand-breadth of stone,
That sleeted edge, that sun-groined icicle,
To dangle there 'twixt cliff and sky, and climb,
Worse than the pendant Icelander, who gropes
Along the wave-washed sea-crags to despoil
The eider's downy nest, despising death
If so his brood lie warm.

Now hand and foot,

Your best of cunning lend! each muscle now
Be tense as steel, flexible as withe!
Quick-eyed, cool-nerved, stout-hearted all,
Cleave to those rock-teeth with the clutch of fate!
Make sure your foothold, grappled to each step!
Let no confusing glances stray to sound
The windy gulfs of those brain-whirling voids!
Be shrewd to shun each rocking stone, each wreath
Of frozen snow out-drifted o'er the abyss!
Grow like an ivy to a crumbling tower,
And, creeping push your wary way above,
And still above, and yet again above!
No mirth nor word enlivens now the task,
No vagrant eye, no playful sportiveness
Nor idle thought relieves the grinding toil.
Breathless and voiceless drag they toilsome on;
Point after point they take, expecting each
To be the last, and still in each deceived.

An hour, a tedious, tardy-footed hour
Of dogged clamber, then the slender tip,
Goal of their search, desired long with pain,
Draws nearer, nearer to delighted sight,
The haughty crest bates its unbending pride;
Supreme 'mid heaven an isle of lonely stone,
One stable speck 'mid shoreless seas of air,
It waits their conquering steps; then tranquil still
As marble Juno in her seated calm,
The Monte Rosa in her stateliness
Receives them bustling where they proudly come,
And yields them transient lodgment where for aye
She dwells 'neath pure resplendent snows, her crown;
Nor lends her heed to their exhausted cheer
Which dies still-born in that high solitude,
And echoless void of sky. But they glad

As far-spent swimmers on a longed-for beach,
Not waiting, throw themselves along, and laugh
A silent laugh, sweeping a free glance round
The ringed horizon of the circle-world,
Where dimmed sight fails in purple depths of
space.

II.

THE SUMMIT.

And what a vision greets their weary gaze!
What realms of wonder, chaos of wild dreams
Out-chaosed, kingdoms and seas of tumult!
A granite continent asunder torn,
And plowed as though fierce earthquakes oft had driven
Their shares beneath its rocky ribs, and turned
Their crossing furrows here; or as one day
The welded globe itself o'er-strained had burst
With swift explosion of all elements
Revolted 'gainst their holdings, and discharged
Its ragged fragments on offending plains.
Alp upon Alp, mount upon mountain piled!
Ridges sublime towered with sublimer peaks!

Valaisian, Oberland, and Dauphiné,
Graian, and Cottian, and Maritime!
Range behind range banked to the bended skies,
And proudly burnished by the full-orbed sun!
Huge forms in armies, fresh as had they risen
An hour ago, and dressed their glittering ranks;
Like hosts of fair-skinned Northmen on foray,
Encamped afield in Gothic turbulence,
Scarce chief obeying, loyal to small law,
And white their mighty tents, as pitched but yesterday.
All living Vikings seem, about to move
And clash their armor, while they ask who comes
Intruding on their guarded bivouac.
The nearest thus:
The further masses merged
Through wild disorders to far-stretching lines,
That fortressed cities feign, the nameless burgs
Of superhuman folk, the precipice

Their frowning rampart, cloud-girt peaks their
towers,
Impassable ravines their moats of dread,
Bastions unstormed save of the jealous heavens.
Their parapets a wondrous sky-line draw,
With pyramids, rude Memnons, monoliths
Adorned as had dead Egypt lent her spoil,
Or greater than Egyptian built him new,
And vaster, marked with older hieroglyphs
Than Luxor boasts, or buried Nineveh;
Scriptures of thrust and strain, of fracture, fire,
And frost, by those perpetual scribes, who
scrawled
These no man's records of a no man's day.
Here as the distance lengthens, spire and crag
Draw in perspective to vast colonnades,
To which St. Peter's are as river reeds
To California's pines, fading in haze
Beyond, where faint as truth when new the last,
Their bases lost in grosser atmospheres,
Hang strangely pendant to the arch of heaven.

How vast the magic-builded spectacle!
Unearthly architectures, frost-temples,
And winter palaces of nature! Sure
Some Goth Aladdin must have set the slaves
Of lamp and ring in their uncanny tribes,
At bitter labors here to pile these towers
In numbers so innumerable!
First show the great Valaisians, told before;
Then dreamily beyond the ribbon Rhone
The tall Bernesers of the Oberland,
Pillars of cloud by day, at dusk of fire.
Their chief, if chief may be 'mid such great peers,
Grave Finster-Aarhorn's storm-girt pinnacle,
Whose tower of silence mocks the wrecking years;
Then vestal Jungfrau, Amazon of maids,
As for long-hindered nuptials still attired,
Whose safe charms ten thousand rosy sunsets
Flush with warm hues of youth, renewed in vain;
Next, her severe confessor, white-friar Mönch,

Eldest Carthusian, ere Carthusians were,
Prevents fair Jungfrau from the sculptured strength
Of comely Eiger, knightly in his grace;
There Blumlis-Alp laments her blighted flowers,
Gay asters, gentian blue, pale edelweiss,
Whose nameless sweetness made that high air glad,
Till, balked of lady's love, a wizard foul
Her green fields buried 'neath charmed sheets of snow;
There cloud-capped Wetterhorn's cathedral pile,
Source of perennial streams; its minster towers
Fret the bright sky with various tracery.

Leave these, and front another heaven, and lo!
Another pageant and a rival pomp:
For distant Grivola looms silvery soft
Against the south, where slant and sleep,
In wondrous peacefulness unvisited,

The wide white meadows of Grand Paradis
Enringed in black-mailed arms of scowling crag;
The wind-tormented crest of Les Ecrins
Smoking in stony surge mid smoking clouds,
And Monte Viso islanded in mist,
Sustained by heart of rock against Time's enmity;
While eastward Piz Bernina's wimpled hood
Upon the last horizon, — or is 't a cloud
Far-glistening o'er the frosty Engadine?
And west, Mt. Blanc serene, whose perfect dome
Shames silver cupolas of all the Czars
To beggary, uprolls his lordly head
From out the speary thick of his *Aiguilles*,
And looks unchallenged monarch, o'er his peers,
To stately Rosa, — king to his crowned queen.

Below, so far that even the pirate hawk,
Swooping for prey above the living fields,
Would never spy what in the hollow hides,

Pinched gorges knit their unrelenting brows,
And fertile valleys, rich with corn and vine,
Bend their sweet stream-like curves as they were grooved
By pushing glaciers of the chillier prime,
That with their icy horns gored through the rock,
And scourged the goodly meadows in their wrath,
Slaying whole tribes of feather, fur, and fin.
Here winds the deep, rock-bastioned Wispach vale,
Perpetual acre of immortal death,
And playground of all perils, where disport
The stealthy village-smothering avalanche,
The frightful land-slip, when the half-mount slides
From its high vantage ruining to the plain;
The earthquake's shuddering mischief from deep ground,
The bursting glacier's deluge unrestrained

Of giant ice-blocks swimming on swift floods,
In awful inundation charging down
Upon the helpless valley laid asleep,
And sweeping off the herds, the crops, the soil,
Dear lowly homes and families of men.
There the Anzasca Cañon, — fissure choked
'Twixt throttling cliffs, that ban health-giving suns
Save at the top of noon, and foul disease
Engender 'mid its large sublimities.
There happier Alagna's bowery gorge,
Idyl of rippling foliage and gray stone,
Where frothy cascades cool from springs of snow
Fling out the drenching spray to weeping boughs
That droop their pendulous leafage heavily;
The glossy chestnut blooms, the odorous birch
And sweetly fruitful fig with laurels blend
Immingling on the war-worn cheeks and brows
Of mammoth bowlders, thick-strewn everywhere,
A storm of rocky fragments thundered down

From Rosa's awful summit in the clouds,
And left as harmless ruins moss-grown here.
There Gressonay her broader vale expands
In gentle swales mown bare as fresh-reaped fields
By the keen glacier-draught that reaps unceasingly;
While lower slopes yield to Italian suns
Rich Southern fruits ungrudgingly bestowed
On the Teutonic strangers lingering there
Mayhap from ancient forays long forgot.
Fleet-footed brooklets, nurslings of the hills,
Run gayly down each valley, full of haste,
Gurgling to night and day their wordless song;
And other vales beside unfurl their folds,
D'Ayas, Tournache, Pelline, and nameless more,
That fan-like ray towards every vagrant wind,
Towards Greek Marseilles and Lyons' silken mart;
Geneva, dear to Calvin and Voltaire,

Of creed and cavil the unaureoled saints;
Towards Nurnberg old, and Munich new by art;
The sea-queen Venice, Turin, lair of kings;
And that low Mediterranean wave,
Where boy Columbus oared his baby skiff,
Upon its tamer billows nursing heart
To dare the wild Atlantic's unsailed surge,
And seeking old worlds hap to find a new;
Towards Como's castled shores, Maggiore's isles,
Where doves coo soft mid pure camelias' bloom,
And Milan, whose still white cathedral walls
Resent the whiter snow-lifts of these hills.

III.

WITH NATURE.

But what a sight for men of burgs and glebes!
Such mighty circumstance, imperial pomp
Out-braving all they boast of rich and great!
Intolerable commonplace disdained,
And costliest majesties made friendly!
The high brought low, the low sunk to the abyss!
The haughty mountains leveled with the eye!
The earth-despising clouds beneath one's feet
Confounded with the fields they still contemn!
The solid dome of firmament, that seemed
To roof this crest, dissolves to breathing air,
And breathing ether late one's native air
Seen deep below shows like a lucid sea

Spread in blue bays and gulfs of atmosphere,
Where wave the trees as trailing water-weeds
Wherein men rove as fish in denser seas,
And seek their food, and find it in their kind,
And find life dear, and full of changeful charm,
And loathe to leave it, loving all its ways.
A universe reversed! heavens new, new earth!
Bosomed in peacefulness and sunny sleep.
Mid-winter here, with tropic summer yon!
A long, long climb of ever-climbing line!
A fairy world of snow-peaks pale with height,
And glacier-jeweled, draperied with fog;
Unsmiling pines that sentinel the crags,
And ambuscade the gorges, whose gnarled arms
Catch out at every vagabond of cloud
Found loitering in their camps; hamlets faint
Between long tongues of glacier, perched so high
It seems their villagers must live in heaven;
So steeply slant, their farms one day must slide
With crop and châlet to the crouching vales;

And rarely lodged on some out-thrusting ledge
The pious chapel set, trace of man's pain;
The swooning lowlands as a garden rolled;
The sheeted lakes, and soundless waterfalls,
And litter of gray shingle everywhere!

One broods o'er all in silence nigh to death,
Scarce breathing lest the magic spectacle
Like sleep-spun dreams dissolving fade and pass,
And leave the old horizon long outworn,
Wherein his life has wasted heretofore.
The formless air in twinkling ripples stirred
Its shimmering ether pours around the whole,
Gold, amber, azure, amaranth, and pearl,
All colors blended in its lucent films,
That smooth the rough, and make the savage fair,
Weaving the mazy interrupted lines
Of thwarted range, and rudely-cloven ravine
In one vast complex of grand harmonies,

Where every chaos melts to ordered grace.
Not great Beethoven riding on the blasts
Of his melodious passion at its height
More graciously doth blend his storm of sound, —
Its swelling angers, its heart-piercing pains,
Its outbursts of deep joy, that die away
To breathless peace wherein the soul finds God, —
In symphonies imperishable as man,
Than greater Nature sways this rocky storm,
This hideous turbulency, and barren wreck
Of shattered continent to harmonies
Ethereal, majestic, wild, serene,
One strain untroubled of harsh discords born.
Drifts o'er the whole a spell of utter sleep,
A silence deep as that of midnight skies,
So undisturbed that all a picture seems,
And we the painted men impassively
As figures on the unrolled canvas set.

Far spins that truant ball our whilom earth!
A little length, such as a man might pace
Within an idle hour upon the plain,
Hath raised us up to some celestial realm,
Whence we look strangely down upon this globe
As on an exile planet swinging clear
Its rounded ball in airy space beneath;
Some nearer moon through telescope descried,
A stranger orb, and foreign to our feet:
Though vaguely deem we still that once we knew
Its scenes, and lived its troubled citizens,
In days long gone, and wearily forgot.

But what is this lighter than infant's breath,
No mist, nor voice, nor viewless herald's touch,
Yet sure some Presence rare, impalpable,
Through void skies leaning towards the skyey peak,
Which streams, a spectral form diaphonous,

Above the high-piled ranges near and far,
The sunless deep defiles, and farthest stretch
Of copious distance, to the cloudy verge
Of bounded space? More faint than zephyr's
breath
It lays soft spells upon us and o'ercomes
Our thought:
Is it some Genius of the hill?
The Spirit of the peak, that ne'er descends
To disenchanted leas, but here at home
A dainty Ariel and delicate
Sways glimmering, wavering, whispering every-
where?

Phantom most strange, elusive, general!
Divine World-Spirit! universal Power!
Soul of things visible in deep response
To what seems soul in us, — our greater self —
Out-breathing from vast Nature in her wilds!
The Pan so loved and tenderly adored

When men were artless children! Faintly falls
Its breeze-born voice abroad unsyllabled,
Scarce heard above the heart-beats, and yet seems
Burdened with utterance of mysteries
That crowd around our being from its birth.
And each ear listens reverently subdued;
Savage or saint, savant or dreamless man
Of shrewd affairs, or he whom life has drained
Of all sweet fearfulness, alike lends heed.
A messenger and message comes unsought,
A phantom touch plays lightly o'er his sense,
A brush of ghostly wings invisible
Makes rustle near his heart; the mountain god
Approaches his high seat; and deeply moved
With ancient Hebrew of a rural faith
He looks up to the hills whence comes his Help;
Or with wild Aryan warriors, kindred old,
Sees in the peerless white Himalaya
The Brama's shining home with His strong gods;

Or half believes, even late as yesterday,
With oft-defeated guides that Spirits strong
Hold safe the keep of frowning Matterhorn,
While yet that rock beat all vain climbers back.
And still a God! a God! rapt feeling cries;
His face makes beauty in that formless air,
His hand weaves splendors of that flimsy mist,
He builds a magic into crag and glen,
And with His living presence cunningly
Blends scene and seer to one accordant joy.
So trembling through the landscape like a sun
That breaks in drizzly dawn on ice-mailed trees
And glances fitfully down prismed boughs,
A thousand suns where yet no light shines clear,
This glimmering presence faint and fugitive
Breaks coyly from the prospect everywhere,
And sparkling like frail dew-drops deftly hides,
As were one glint enough, in mystery.

Of old, beholders close to nature held
Found mighty gods and glorious enough

In these pale visions of an unknown world:
Dyaus, old Kronos, Zeus the son of Time,
Demeter-earth, bright Helios, and Jove
The cloud-compeller, Pallas wise, strong Mars,
Dew-bearing Dawn on mead-besprinkled steeds,
A god for every cloud, and tree, and stream,
Till glamour made the world a home of ghosts
And plain meek earth, creature of airs and soils,
Robbed of her daily powers and homely use
Became a baleful sacredness and vain,
While men went groping for the rainbow's gold,
Or begging life where but the lifeless stood,
And seeking gods where subtlest elements
Their mightier service proffered unperceived.

Would gods were present! How would doubting men
Give them high greeting and dear reverence due!
But none comes nearer, none breaks through,
Nor rends the unlifted veil; no clear wise word

Drifts softly forth from out the insensate noise;
A goodly world unhaunted lies serene
In its sufficing loveliness; no more!
The vagrant voice is but an errant wind,
A sea-shell's murmurous nothing oft rehearsed.
Such helpless voice divine Prometheus heard,
And deemed it ample in his heat of rage,
When chained on Caucasus, as fire to flint,
Groaning he lay, and praying for some god
To rescue him unhappy, ate his great heart out,
The while he dreamed Zeus' vulture battened
on it.
Now is his Hercules become a name
For solar myth, and his tormentor Zeus,
With all his brilliant compeers, left for dead,
And dead the fires that on their altars blazed;
No longer sit their councils on the hills,
Nor flash their forms before the impassive sun,
Nor stoop they now to men in battle's stress,
Nor from the solemn cave breathe oracles.

But pushed by ruthless Science in her quest
From secret haunts whereof their hearts were glad,
They cease from gorge or peak to be discerned,
Retired indignant to the farthest star,
Where man may never hail them till he die.
So vainly strain man's eager eyes, his ears
As vainly hearken; the wavering mists
Close round veiled Isis hidden as of old,
Nor open through to Deity whom thus
By searching none finds out; still vainly beat,
As butterflies their fickle-spotted wings,
Our rainbow hopes against the mail of secrets;
The Mysteries keep their visors closed
On peak and plain, nor write their legend out
On rock or temple anywhere; and still
They challenge each new-comer, what reply
His life or lips may frame respecting them,
While they restrain their tongues from telling, yea,

Or nay, concerning human destiny;
And like the dead keep silence unperturbed.

And yet the charm remains; the wizard spell
Weaves sweet delusions round the willing sense,
As round the swaying cobra with his reeds
The wily Indian weaves a thrall of sounds.
The disillusioned mountains keep their state;
Eyes dew with tears beholding, raptures thrill
To pain; soft silence brushes babbling tongues;
The beautiful, bewildering immensity
O'erpowers our souls with longing vague, and
sweet.
We cease from thought, and shade our mortal
brows,
Our eyes are not attempered to such light,
Our hearts not strung to such large harmonies.
The two-fold glory of the earth and sky
Far-stretching to their one horizon line
Subdues us utterly; we seem unfleshed;

Like homeless frigate-birds that freely live
On ever-outstretched wing untiringly,
The swift imagination spreads her plumes
For one immortal flight o'er all eye sees,
And all that lies unseen beyond, to touch
The rim and verge of last infinity;
In vain! her pinions droop while yet
She skims the threshold; astronomic spaces
Are too wide; and then all space and endless time
Come crowding on to ask inclusion due
Within the airy voyage ere 't is done;
Mid-heaven fails its strength, falters its quest
Disquieted, dismayed, exhausted thought
Can only gasp, whence came all this, and why,
And whither goes, and what shall be its end,
And ours who ask? And get no answer clear,
Not from the earth out-rolled, nor ocean gray,
Nor from the spacious heaven o'er-domed, nor from

The ambitious mind with its increasing powers:
But baffled still one lingers as in trance
Full of surmises indolently vague,
Then fearless launches out on vacancy,
In search of some strong Maker undisclosed,
Whom no thought measures, but whose hope transports,
As noble music when at piercing heights
It beats the troubled air to ecstasy,
And lifts the spirit speechless into bliss.
Seems all a sight from Mount Delectable,
Gateway, and garden of lost Paradise,
A heavenly land where no man knows of pain.

So Nature! with thy strong enchantments, thou
Dost work thy will on us thy children fond,
Till falling on thy breast enraptured, prone,
We ache to know thy heart, and heart of hearts,
And swooning in thy beauty crave thy grace.
But unconcerned thou dost elude us still,

And keep us at a distance half estranged,
And though we are thy children, feel thy pulse,
And genial throb of being in each vein,
Yet never close we with thee perfectly,
Chilled in our passion, in our love restrained
By thy composed and sweet indifference;
Though still like doting children must we love,
And bless thee our enchanter, till we die.

So lightly dost thou hold us, and so cool
Thy custom, and demeanor, Nature! that
No more than for dumb beast, or growing flower,
Thou dost concern thyself for us, or care!
Yet to ourselves we seem thy master work,
Thy crown, and jewels in thy crown, so high,
That o'er thyself in swelling syllables
We proudly vaunt, and boasting make loud claim
To greatness greater than thine own,
To higher lineage, diviner end,

And destiny excelling thine, as sun the stars;
But thou in thy serene complacency
Dost heed our claim no whit, dost treat us still
As wayside accidents, as mists of morn,
And like a mist dissolvest us to nothing.

So small are we indeed and vain! to whom
These trifling ranges of repeated ridge,
These trivial knolls seem mighty, lying here
A mower's swath, or weathered windrow raked
Upon the uncumbered rondure of large earth,
Or rank of haycocks waiting for the wain
On the good farmer's closely-shaven mead.
The shortness of our stature measuring all.
Is guilty of their mightiness to us,
As his slight body makes his bushel-heap
To the atom-ant an ample hill, whereon
His grand affairs transacted ripen apace;
But easily our girdled globe doth roll

Its circle full, and smooth, though roughened thus
By these huge jutting promontories
Within its orb, as rolls an orange true
Upon its wrinkled rind; our smallness sole
Makes them so great. Insects of space are we,
By our own globe and habitation dwarfed
To crickets on its rugous continents,
That chirp their shining summer hour, and cease;
While earth itself a petty star, and mean
With Sirius, or far Aldebaran,
Compared, or any nightly orb, swings on
Its annual round scarce noticed mid the spheres.
Insects of bounded space, and straitened time!
To whom these hills eternal seem, so old
Their recent day, so fixed their crags! while they
With ceaseless waste consume their rocky strength,

And feel their vast antiquity to be
But as a breathless second on the score
Of that eternity, whose ages blind
Fleet as the clock-ticks sound their passing by.
While we as music of a player's horn
Blare out upon the silence and are done.

But small or large, what matter! what we are, we are.
Naught cares the well-housed tortoise in his shell
That he is yet nor hare nor swallow fleet.
Still bound our nerves with exultations, hopes;
Still breathe we this high air with rapture, still
See earth dilated to a palace large,
Roofed with blue bravery of the cloud-sailed sky,
Lit by the unnumbered lustres of the sun,
Swept by the wandering custom of all winds,
Home of dark grandeurs, and fair loveliness;

Our fathers' home and to our children dear,
Scene of the million happy human lives,
That crowd its continents, and sail its seas.
O Earth! too little is thy fullness bruited forth,
Too much absorbed in men man lives untouched
By thy unceasing movement, endless calm,
And loses oft his soul in drudgeries
That bring no joy nor lead to ampler life.
And still thou liest smilingly content
Unsmitten by contradiction and unvexed,
Thy hills uplifted like a fairy's boon,
And with no words dost call us, offering
Not grain alone but gladness in thy face,
With good and fair and whatso'er gives power.
Rejected, feared, or scorned, neglected still
With quiet patience as of sleeping child
Thou leavest all for all, and him that takes
Thy meaning thou dost fill with gracious gifts,
And such rare transport, that the vanished gods
Seem re-disclosed to him, and dædal earth

Enough without a better heaven; for him
Comes each new day a fairy prince to kiss
His lips, and waken him to larger life,
Bring him the royal sun, the pensive moon,
The deep, uncounted stars, the rolling change
Of seasons old as sea sweet wooing airs,
Or storms of overwhelming majesty,
The magic mystery of being, all
To draw him out of stony moods of gloom,
To fill his days with hours of beaten gold,
To touch his nature with the strength of hills,
To cool his brow with freshness of blithe morns,
To give his mind the large horizon's span,
And to his heart the peace of sunny wolds.
Such dreams salute us on this air-girt top,
And summit of the world; our souls escape
To novel liberties, franchises strange;
We rend the withes of custom, rise and fall
Infuriate on the coarse Philistine hordes
Of common thought, stale reason, and mean use,

Rebuke our wrinkled creeds, conceits, weak
fears,
And all that hinders from unleashed desire;
Ourselves we free as birds, — the libertines
Of heaven's azure fields: no hurrying cloud,
Nor yon unmastered eagle sailing lone,
Whose seldom-striking pinions fan the winds
Of farthest continents, while he not recks
What land swims small beneath him, soars
more free.
Us now, repentant skeptics, takes the god;
Our blood runs wild like those who, drunk with
wine,
Danced madly in the ancient mysteries,
And whirled in Mænad rout, and cried aloud
Evoe, Bacche! Ah, Evoe, hail!
And felt the god suffusing every sense
That with the orgy all of self expired.
And we are drunk with Nature at her feast,
We are ourselves the genii of the peaks;

We call to Lyskamm, Breithorn, Matterhorn,
To Weisshorn in the distance, Mischabel,
And every shining summit far and near,
To hail them as our brothers, living parts
Of great organic nature one with us;
And with that chained Prometheus on his rock,
We cry, O Ocean old, and ye gray mists,
And swift-winged breezes, and much-laughing waves,
All-seeing sun, and earth our mother dear,
Gods of the prime, in the white dawn of man,
We keep to you this day a revelry,
Ancestral, not Semitic, Aryan pure,
And to us Aryans kin, as at your shrines
We worship with the souls of cousins gone,
Who, living once as now we live, still found
In you their strength, their wonder, and their joy;
Admit us to your mysteries; make large
Our hearts with benedictions new,

Give us to cherish all your mighty laws,
To love your sights, your sounds, your secret powers,
And with you live unsaddened, unreproached,
Till we lie down beneath you undisturbed.
As some worn saint from penance drear released,
And floating out of tortured flesh to God,
Beholds draw near the imperishable dawn
Whose peaceful hope receives the holy dead,
So drifting in our mountain ecstasy,
And bathed in dreamy atmospheres we see
Approaching through a vast of space, the peace
That folds the round world in its soft embrace
And bounds of being as an ether folds
The tethered planets in their heavenly rings.

IV.

THE DESCENT.

But though enraptured, men may not abide
On Monte Rosa's slender point, nor build
Their tabernacles amid its clouds,
Plain-nurtured creatures, they the plain require.
The genial noontide dies to ugly night,
And night so near the stars is harsh with cold,
While shameless hunger coming like a dun
To splendid palace doors sues fretfully;
For whom grows naught on this heaven-piercing spire.
One lingering here would find his frugal fare
Leaner than forage of starved grasshoppers
That cling to mullein seared by nipping frosts
Of late September to brown barrenness.

So now prosaic guides discreetly wise,
Upgathering all their gear command descent.
And all the more that the low, lonely wind
Lifts to a louder key its drony hum
Spinning a thread of snow from each slim spire,
That like a hairy comet streams abroad,
Of coming tempest harbinger, and flag.
Now urge foreboding guides unwonted speed;
In haste run all, like fleeing Israel,
To that unshorn *Arête*, again to swing
Unhappy bodies there, in dismal case,
And curse its raveled raggedness, with sighs
That flesh were harder or tall rock more soft.
Another lunacy, that grim descent,
Unlike good Vergil's facile road to hell!
The upward perils doubly perilous
Recur; the uncertain feet grope blindly down,
No eye their hold foreseeing; painfully
The hands let go the unwonted grasp above.
And while like seals on land they fumble on

With cumbrous care, like gliding seals at sea
The rapid tempest skims the etherial wave,
Borne on more winds than Æolus held, that fall
Like birds of prey with furious beak and claw
Upon the mangled ridge, their ancient quarry,
Unconquered still through blustering centuries,
Nor giving heed to those poor human mice,
That creep in mortal danger down its face.
And what a place for men in such a war
Of elements unloosed! an ice-glazed edge
Of crag, whereon the sturdy mountain goat
For all his climbing were afraid! A gale
Would pluck the ruffled falcon from his perch,
Or sweep the windy crow down leagues of sky!
Three miles of storm-swept space above the round
And general globe, with but this untrimmed spar,
This stony topmast of the good ship "Earth"
To hang by. Even the night-wrapped sea-boy

Upon the switching yards when waves swim high,
And drench the humming cordage, is less far
From gentle safety ; while scurrying fogs
Thicker than banks of metaphysic cloud,
And drearier, close darkly in, as night
Itself were falling out of time ; flies swift
The petaled snow, and crooked lightnings strike
From cloud to cliff mid thunderous echoes roused.
Now life's sweet wine to bitter wormwood turns ;
The beauteous Day deforms her shining face,
And hides a withered crone beneath the skies ;
All landmarks disappear, all sight cut off,
The wide world narrows to an eagle's roost;
The men are left alone, they and the storm.
Chilled, blinded, stiff, hands freezing, freezing feet,
They still hold on their formidable way,
Wrapping that hateful twist of stone about,

As pendulous spider wraps his slender thread
With all his legs, yet making tardiest way;
And now they swing from axe-head planted deep
Above, now slip roped fast down dripping icicles,
Or scramble warily mid loosened stones,
That tottering drop to soundless depths below.
And oft the anxious guide's sharp cry rings out
Above the roar of storm, "Take care; don't slip;
Take time," and oft he strains the slackened rope;
But if some bungler trips, with anguish shrieks,
"For Heaven's sake, care! Hold fast, be sure!"
While louder screeds the gale, and fans the *Arête*
With measureless wide wing unceasingly,
Like the mysterious roc of wonder tale:
Still on they grope fog-smothered, yet unharmed,

Till youth's light heart quick rallied into play,
Finds all half-jest, and laughs within the storm;
When one raw tyro numbed by windy cold
Turning an ugly corner backward slips,
And stumbles toward a fatal plunge cloud-swathed,
Upon the Lyskamm side of naked precipice,
Where any fall, like winged Mercury,
Leads swift to Pluto and the sunless fields.
But quick as viewless word, which that wild drudge
The lightning runs with, leaps the undaunted guide,
His life flung on the hazard instantly,
To clutch the luckless stumbler as he reels;
And bending all his lustihood to task,
With one great lurch of his resistless arm
Swings him across the knife-edge like a babe;
And since no time to get his footing there
Is left, he rather leaps than falls

Down the sharp rival slope, less precipice
Though scarcely less, upon the northern face
Where seamless ice and glassy smooth runs down
To deadly steeps an instant's dash below.
There flash they down a double meteor,
Scarce seen, when gone, towards that awful brink,
Where waits the primal Nihilist, calm death.
But now the cool-brained Swiss, shrewd mountaineer,
Knit to his man as grasping hawk to fowl,
Bites deep his axe-point in the frozen slide,
Till hangs the trusty steel in its own groove
And checks their flight in mid destruction stayed,
One bold moment's work, no more! but moment
Laced with all the threads of spinning Fates.

So holding on with enforced stubbornness,
The party finds its way whole and unmarred,

To the large bosses now fresh-clad in snow,
Whence the *Arête* springs forth its dizzy spire;
Here easy foothold offers rapid course,
Yet mockingly, for where at morn the snow
Night-crusted gave a marble floor as laid
For conquering caliphs, now the soft flakes lie
In fluffy lightness, hindering every stride
As feathery scruples clog ambition's way.
But since the worst seems past, and danger less,
The weary men go carelessly, nor heed
Repeated admonitions of the guides,
But straggle wide and try to shorten space,
Thinking the tedious miles remaining still
But frigid drudgery unspiced with danger's zest;
And trudging on unroped they find the storm
A blithe adventure rich in novelty.
But prowling peril with a stealthy tread
Haunts every Alpine path, and suddenly
One comrade makes a short glissade, where shows

No harm, and like a wanton boy skims down
A slope, but losing foothold as he slides,
Turns from his course, and o'er an unseen brink
Rolls headlong, disappearing like a ghost
That noiseless flits along, without a word.
Engulfed and swallowed clean within the jaws
Of a wide-spread crevasse, whose steely lips,
Fringed like a shark's with gleaming fangs of fear,
Grin horrible, the glacier's ghastly smile,
Portal and pit of an unshoveled grave.

Now what a thrilling outcry rends the air!
What pallid terror sits on every cheek!
What dark foreboding clouds each knitted brow!
And chief the faithful guides, who fullest know
How deep the peril, stand amazed with fear.
All huddle round the fatal brink, and bend
Into the twilight chasm, and call down
And listen fearfully, to hear at last

One muffled groan steal up the rayless pit,
Then utter stillness, as the dead are still.
Now aching fear lends bungling hands and slow
To frantic zeal; while tremblingly they join
The ropes in one, and knot it fast about
An eager guide, — too eager in his fear, —
Who quickly then is lowered between the walls
And icy jaws of that unfathomed crevasse.
Down, far down into the chilly darkness
He descends, peering this way and that
In search of their lost comrade, finding naught,
And groping still, when with a hasty run
The ill-tied knot, weak in its fastening, slips,
And parting midway drops the pendant Swiss
Within the death-trap. Whither? Ah, whither?
Who knows whither? They only know that two
Are gone, and one perhaps is killed; and both
Imperiled utterly need swift release,
And half the priceless rope is in the chasm.

Those on the brink, with slackened cord in hand,
A moment sit as dazed, stunned, paralyzed,
Feeling a horror of great darkness fall,
As on the sleeping song-birds falls the owl
Devouring happy broods, melodious of joy.
And that black tragedy, life sometimes is,
Comes bearing down upon them, flying at peak
The death-head's flag, with fierce disasters manned.
In such an hour the heart grows old as time,
And dreamily seems one with sufferers
Of every age and clime; with martyrs, slaves,
With hopeless prisoners, men wrecked at sea,
On prairies lost, or bayed by ravening wolves,
Or anyhow set on by fierce Calamity
With his blood-thirsty hounds; one bends beneath
The undivided woes accumulate
Of all his troubled race since time bore man,
In his own form and single misery.

Time seems a dream of dreams, and man Time's
fool, —
The flying football of its angry hours.

But moments now are precious, here 's no hour
To indulge in wasteful grief. The men below
Crave speediest rescue ; minutes are as gold.
Swiftly new ropes are spliced, and coats are lent
To give more length ; and soon a second Swiss
Is on his downward way unterrified
By all foregone mishap, who finding late
His comrade-guide unhurt, calls loudly up
The joyful news ; the narrowing chasm had
caught
His falling body in its wedgy jaws,
A trifling pace below, whence his good axe,
Plied skillfully, might work him full release ;
A little toil untrammels him entire,
And quick the ropes re-joining both resume
Their cheerless search, and grope about the
cavern,

Crowding their way along the closing walls,
Two ghastly precipices of dripping ice,
Till finally they light upon their man
Lying motionless, insensible, lodged fast
Upon a ragged ice-shelf boldly pushed
Against the opposing wall, where drawing in
The trenched crevasse constricts its gulfy throat
To half its former breadth. There, still as dead,
One arm hung listlessly from off the shelf,
His dank hair dripping with the ice-dew, stark,
His garments torn, and frozen to the ledge,
Their comrade lies in such an evil plight
As stuns his finders, finding him so low,
And scarce of his salvation seems a hope.
Here is small space to put forth half their force,
So strait the cave, so close its mighty jaws,
That like a coffin hug their victim in,
And gives scant room to swing the trenchant axe

And cut their fellow loose; but manfully,
Like faithful Switzers, losing no dear time,
They ply their utmost skill, their utmost strength,
And work as those who hold another's life
In fee; since still they feel a heart-beat faint,
A flutter of spent life, thanks to the slope
Of ice-wall, where, though steep, the hapless man
Had rather slid than dropped to his cold perch.

Above, the rest sit gloomy on that evil brink,
Holding the loosened rope, and full of boding fears,
Their friend, themselves, in such a desperate plight,
And life seems scarce a boon in such black hour.
And anxiously they wait a sign to pull
Aloft, while flit the dreary moments on,
To find them waiting still in hope deferred.
At last the signal comes, and drawing slow,

They raise — a guide exhausted, strained, dismayed,
And pale with strenuous effort still in vain,
For still their friend is fast ensepulchred.
How chill fares sinking hope in each warm heart!
And haggard grows the waning day, the while
Deaf Nature unrelenting makes no sign,
But storms along as recklessly as were
Our men but stones, and their sweet lives no more
Than frosted leaves; the riotous elements
Prolong their revels; thunder, lightning, sleet,
In wild Walpurgis' dance their demon-parts
Sustain unweariedly; how far from men!
How far from shelter, food, or friendliest fire!
Nor any trodden way of helpful folk
Is here; nor saving hands of help and care;
Protection none, nor mercy; and all vain
The cry for respite; law-obeying heavens

And ordered winds must keep their courses sure,
Though half the sphere fell to their sightless rage.
In vain! men's late repentance, that as fools
They left the peaceful fields, where all the land
Lay safe before their feet, to tempt this rock,
And try conclusions in this wilderness,
Against the mateless forces of roused Earth.
In vain the stifled outcry of their hearts,
"Spare, Nature, spare! dear Mother, spare! Call off
These airy murderers whose lightest sport
It is to slay us, Nature! even in our prime."
But cold and storm hear nothing! Human hands
Must save, or death will sing his pæan on the slain.
Another Swiss descends in that long grave,
And working like a madman recklessly
Cleaves the last obstacle, then twines the rope

About the unconscious body, giving sign
To raise all gently. So again above
They draw their speechless comrade in sad case
A woful mockery of that blithe mate
Who passed this way at morn so buoyant, bold,
Now by such savage handling left in pause
Upon the dreadful threshold, which once crossed,
Recrossed is nevermore; — him they salute
As those about to die salute the dead.

What boots it now that heedless Nature shows
Her utmost grandeurs with an artist's skill,
If tented on the radiant highlands Death
Keeps his black camp, himself a robber knight,
That with his cruel troopers scours the land;
Nor gives to harmless travelers any peace
By day or night, though traveling carefully.
But one he flings at from the shelving crags,
Another clutches through a swathing fog,
Or skulking in the glacier plucks a third

To dripping dungeons foul with dead men's
bones;
Or with swift, snowy minions whirling down
Bears off whole comradeships of lusty men
To cells of silence whence no ransom buys.
Yet oft the bandit fails, outwitted oft
By wilier human cunning, or o'erborne
By bolder deed; so here he springs his trap
And takes no prey, for that a spark of life
Remains unquenched, a feeble pulse, a trace
Of breathing, small enough, but still enough
To keep life's sluggish current to its flow.
For now all hastily untiring hands
Afford life's ministries, and kindly rough
Recall faint tint of blood to those pleached lips,
Bring back the fuller pulse, the stronger breath,
Till saved their friend sits up, he speaks, he
lives,
And that fell danger baffled slinks away.

But deadly perils still a howling pack
Bark close around their heels, as once again
They strike the downward way; the drifted snow,
The hidden track, the muffling fog, the cold,
And landmarks all invisible; besides
Their saved companion's strength but half regained
Asks careful journeying that hinders speed.
They crawl where scarce the carrier-pigeon's wing
Could over-haste their course; and surly Day
Strides onward toward his western caves; all things
They need; assistance, strength, good cheer, new life.
Will not some helper come? Will never snows
Have end? Will never storm draw off, and clouds
Melt into native nothingness? Is there

No mercy stealing out of heaven to bring
Them rescue? Now that earthly help but fails,
And wearied guides trudge on so heavily!
Forgotten are all words of merriment
As they press on, — unhappy, listless, slow,
Fearful of some yet darker fate to fall.

But storms hold not forever; and at last
This tempest falters, parts its thinning mists,
Calls in its winds, binds back the pelting sleet,
Rolls off the gathered cohorts of thick cloud
That linger low and long in leaden folds
Upon gray Rosa's summits; reappears
The courtly company of kingly hills,
So grand, so pure, so robed in innocence,
So like a royal murderer's lily hands
When in sweet morning dew washed stainless clean
After night's tragedy is done and hid.
And now returns the wonder-working Sun,

Divine life-giver marvelous, and pours
His slanting gold athwart the wintry wolds,
And o'er the distant hill-sides soft and brown,
Where lie kind homes, and happy men go on
To peaceful evening tasks with painless thoughts;
And on the Gorner glacier, far below,
Are moving forms, small as the valiant wren,
But moving hitherward, some kindlier souls
Come out to bring the hard-pressed wanderers
Their sorely-needed succor ere they die.
Now leap all hearts, as if Apollo came
And breathed his godhood's force upon their limbs,
And wrought an ancient miracle within;
That strong and light of foot they push their steps
Down the huge mountain bosses, all alive;
And even their much-hurt comrade, limping on,
Seems filled with wondrous vigor, and restored,
Like half-dead Grecian heroes whom the god

Snatched from the press of battle and made
whole;
Now many a safe glissade at coasting speed
Makes fleet their progress down the hardening
slopes,
And gravitation, like a guardian nurse
Holding small hands, lets down their lengthened
steps,
While blazes glorious sunset overhead,
Smiting the mountains into waves of fire.

So ever flitting, the soft-footed Hours
Bring home the doughty mountaineers unslain,
Beneath the deepening twilight, weary, slow,
But, since they foiled great peril, bold of mien;
Though gratefully as ne'er believed they stride
The foot-worn threshold of the low-browed inn
Upon high Riffel's forehead, whence at dawn
They sped away so flush and stout of heart,
As seems some dreamy untold ages since,

So deep a gulf has rare experience
Thrust 'twixt linked morn and eve. Then resting here
Within the cozy guest-room they recount
Their dread adventure to deep-listening ears,
Still heightening every danger now surpassed,
And fain to tell the grandeurs of the way.
But these will not rehearse themselves in words;
The visual dream transcending frail report
Remains a treasure-trove, a fairy gold
Hid in the loneliest caverns of shy thought,
Not hoarded yet unshared; for none but he
Whose startled eyes have seen can guess the sight
That rises like a mirage, heavenly clear,
Upon the inner vision, undefiled,
Of phantom peaks dim with the silver light,
Of blinding snow-fields roofed with sapphire skies,
Of emerald pastures pierced by glaciers cold,

Of wrinkled crags sad with corroding years,
With streams of misty amethyst between,
Crowding the dream-horizon with such pomp
And wondrous pageantry as dwarfs the real
And living world to thinnest fantasy,
In face of those more regal realms. Alas!
For with all comes deep wistfulness and pain
That such unwasted grandeurs still should stand
To bless beholders with unrivaled joy,
And we not there to see them all our days.

V.

PULVIS ET UMBRA.

So Monte Rosa stands, and so has stood
More years than there are needles on the pine;
And so may further stand unspent more years
Than there are crystals in her banks of snow;
But still the wolfish hours shall gnaw her crags,
The tireless elements that carved her symmetry
Tear at her spires, nor heed that driving rain,
Sleet, cold, sand-bearing wind, and sunshine's kiss,
Or lightning's blow but spoil what once they sped.
The riving rock continually wastes,
The mount shall sink to hill, the hill to mound,
The oak shall grow where once the glacier groaned,

And where snow sparkled shall the snow-drop
star,
Chamois shall yield to sheep, and all to time;
The tribes of beast and men lie down to sleep,
A general sleep unquestioning, and earth
As lifeless nod about the cooling sun
As does the half-seen moon round parent earth;
For all things haste to changing not to end:
One cycle dawns, but treading on its heel
A stronger cycle thrusts it quickly forth,
To be in turn left dying by a third;
Or rather is no cycle but one time,
Whose unit is eternity, of which
The minutes grow to hours, the hours to days,
And these to months, which swell to rapid years,
Or loitering centuries that run their tale,
And tortoise race to such high numerals
As e'en to think of drugs man's memory,
Like poppy or mandragora; a mote
He seems in such deep reckonings, a breath,

A microscopic atom, scarcely more
Than that discerned bacterium that rolls
And finds an ocean in the film of dew
Contained between the close-pressed lenses, held
Beneath the powerful lens of some shrewd man
Of science, searching long to find the start
And genesis of being in the least.
So goeth all things, nothing finds its end
Save in a new beginning which grows old,
And endlessly transforms itself to new.
And this our mountain, in whose shadow we
Have found our pleasure, yields her majesty
To that great sweep of universal law
By which she grew, which brings her to her death.
And who shall say what lies beyond save this:
That some good future issuing from the mists,
And no less gracious, though to us unknown,
May follow with new wonders, splendor, strength,
Such that we well might grieve most bitterly

Should we not be to see it in its prime;
But there we cannot follow, even on fancy's
wing,
For now we stand upon the outmost rim
Of matter vague, eternal, infinite,
And have no chart across its trackless lea.

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